

---

## **E.U. ENGLISH – A VEHICLE FOR INTRA – EUROPEAN COMMUNICATION**

---

**VINȚEAN Adriana**

More and more we acknowledge that the English language has become the language of international communication, of business, of the media and the internet, popular culture and entertainment, on its way to be a dominant global language as far as English and globalization have spread hand in hand through the world.

It is known that nowadays we witness the spread of English outside Great Britain, North America, Australia and New Zealand in a variety of social and cultural situations. The aim of the present study is to describe the various roles and linguistic properties English as a lingua franca has in the different countries of the world and in the countries within the European Union. The theoretical framework of the study is given by Braj Kachru's model of world Englishes. Then this model is being supplemented and extended by an American researcher, Margie Berns' model, concerning the use of English in the E.C.

We know that through the Middle Ages Latin was the only means of education and that of transmitting culture in the Western countries. Between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century French was used as an international language of diplomacy all over the world. An artificial language called Esperanto was worked out by a Polish eye-specialist L.Zamenhof in order to use it for international communication. Esperanto was taught at 600 schools and 61 universities in the 1970s. Up to the present day several newspapers have been published, conferences have been held, a number of books (among them the Bible, the Koran and the Nobel-prize winning book *Fatefulness* by the Hungarian author Imre Kertész) have been translated into Esperanto. Although this language competed to become the lingua franca in the world, it failed on the one hand because of its East-European origin. On the other hand, it is not a native language of a community, it does not have its own traditions, literature and culture. Esperanto is an artificial language lacking political, military and economic power. All over the world there is a need for an international language, because a common language is crucial, but it has to be a natural language and has to have all the qualities Esperanto lacks.

At the outset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is beyond question that the English language has become the lingua franca, the language used for communication

between people living in different countries in the world. Whether a language is a world language or not is no longer decided on the basis of the number of its native speakers. If it were the only criterion, Chinese could undoubtedly become the lingua franca, because Mandarin (Chinese) is spoken by the greatest number of native speakers. English is not only the mother tongue of people living in the English-speaking countries, but also a world language. An interesting phenomenon can be observed in Europe: adults are not very enthusiastic about learning English and using the language when they go on holiday, but for children in Europe it is as clear as day that they have to cope with this task. If a German boy wants to speak to a French person, he has to speak in English. When on holiday, English-speaking children appear to be in charge, reserving hotel rooms, ordering food in restaurants or calling for taxis to the airport. Thanks to the development of technologies and political changes English has become an internationally used language of communication. But the need for a lingua franca is most pressing in Europe for economic reasons. More and more workers want to take advantage of the integrated labour market and find jobs in the neighbouring countries. "Global technology players" also need a common language, a corporate language. Between German and French companies for example English even makes political sense, because the use of this language expresses "linguistic neutrality".

During Queen Elisabeth's 1<sup>st</sup> reign (1558-1603), the number of native English speakers in the world was between 5 and 7 million. When Queen Elisabeth 2<sup>nd</sup> came to the throne in 1952, 250 million people spoke English as their mother tongue and a further 100 million or so learned it as a foreign language. In the 1990s there was an estimated number of 300 million mother-tongue speakers of English in the world. But this number has been far exceeded recently by the number of people who speak English as a second or a foreign language. Unfortunately it is very difficult if not impossible to estimate the number of English speakers in the countries where English is not a mother tongue. No one knows how many people have developed knowledge of English to a reasonable standard of fluency up to the present day.

Researchers point out that the importance and fortunes of languages rise and fall. The variety which has a great international influence today on a scale never seen before, was once of very secondary importance and restricted utility. It holds true for English as well, since the rise and dominance of English in the world has profited from historical circumstances. If we consider other great lingua francas, for example Greek and Latin, we can realize that they seemed imperishable, but faded away with the declining power of their speakers. Historical precedent would have suggested that the decline of British power meant the decline of the English language. But the power moved to the other side of the ocean, and English received a renewed lease on life. Later English received a further injection of life from a wider world, which it has already penetrated. Edwards quotes Burchfield, former editor of the Oxford English Dictionary and consultant to the 1980s television series. English is spoken by more and more people in Europe, because we experience that this language is becoming the binding

agent in our continent. The current status of English needs documentation as well as scientific investigation.

We can divide Western Europe into:

- a) intense use of English: The Netherlands, Luxemburg, the Scandinavian Countries.
- b) moderate use of English: Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, France.
- c) little use of English: The Mediterranean Countries except the touristic areas.

Researchers like B.Kachru, M.Berns and many others contributing to such publications as “English Today” give us new insights into the nature and function of English inside and outside the countries where English is a native language. Researchers also propose models that help us to understand the new status of English. The best model was introduced by B. Kachru (Kachru1985, 1992).

Kachru proposes a model which serves as a framework for studying the various roles English plays in different countries of the world and in various sociolinguistic situations.

First, there are countries where English is spoken as the mother tongue of the inhabitants, where it is a primary language- an inner circle of countries-. These countries are Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. These countries are the traditional bases of English and provide standards and norms for non-native speakers, to which they have to conform.

Then, there are Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Zambia- an outer circle of countries. The following features are to be taken into account:

- the place of English in the linguistic repertoire (where it is only one of two or more codes) and
- the status of English in the language policies (whether it is an official language like in Nigeria or one of the state languages like in Zambia or an associate language like in India).

Other functional characteristics of English are also mentioned by Kachru, for example its function is extended to a variety of social, educational, administrative and literary domains. The language norms in the outer circle countries are determined by two factors:

- their own institutionalised varieties and
- the norm-providing varieties used in the inner-circle countries.

In a variety of countries, for example China, Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Zimbabwe, and countries of the former Soviet Union English functions as an international language and the speakers develop performance varieties. They learn English as a foreign language. This is called the expanding circle. Their situation differs from that of the other countries -the outer circle- because they did not have a colonial past of outer circle users of English. In these countries English is becoming more and more influential and the number of its learners is increasing rapidly.

In this model individual countries are identified, not regional groups. Each country represents a distinct sociolinguistic unit. But when examining the linguistic

situation of the European Community researchers suggest regional grouping on the following grounds: doing so creates a unit like the multicultural and multilingual situation of a country such as India. As in India, in the EC there are a number of languages and dialects used by a wide range of speech communities. Both for Europeans and the people living in India English is the language of wider communication. The European Community has been a political and economic unit since the economic integration in 1992. There is a sense of unity through a common culture.

The European Union is established as a political and economic unit, recognized and treated as such by its neighbours and trading partners. The success of the EC as an economic union depends greatly on the way the member states can develop European identity. That is why the Community has devised language and student exchange programmes like LINGUA, TEMPUS and ERASMUS. The purpose of these programs is to bring together people living in the member states with those living in the accessing countries.

The model of the various world Englishes shows the different functions the English language performs in different parts of the world and in different sociolinguistic situations, for example in Africa, Asia or the Middle-East. Although the spread of English in Europe can be considered as part of a global process, the model concerns neither Europe nor some European countries. Due to the spread of English and the variety of functions the language performs it would be necessary to extend the model to Europe..

We can find a wide range of speech communities in Europe. Each community has its own culture but at the same time constitutes part of the cultural heritage of Europeans. Each speech community has its own language and dialect, which is one of the number of different languages and dialects spoken in Europe. In spite of the fact that each community has its own mother tongue, English is a language of wider communication. The knowledge of English is essential for citizens of the member states to move freely across borders, to live, work and get training outside their homeland. In the European Union the goal is political and economic integration and this objective leads to unification in language use, which in turn creates a unique sociolinguistic situation. According to M. Berns this situation can be characterized by three key features. They are as follows:

The first characteristic feature is the multiple roles English plays for various citizens of the community. In the unified Europe English functions as a mother tongue, a foreign language and an international language. For citizens of Great Britain and Ireland English is a native and a second language, in other countries it is a foreign or an international language, but in Luxembourg together with French and German, English is regarded as a primary language. In the Netherlands English is so widely understood that it is considered by some as one of the languages of this Dutch-speaking community. English is a compulsory school subject in primary and secondary education. In the other countries of the EU English is generally regarded as a foreign and an international language.

The second development English is undergoing across Europe is nativization or Europeanization. It means that Europeans introduce innovations on the basis of their mother tongue. At the same time they de-Americanize and de-Anglicize English, which involves a number of linguistic processes. The most striking features are lexical borrowings. Words like *eventual* having the meaning *probably, perhaps or actual meaning current, topical* are examples of the continental use of English. Conventions of the native language and culture are also maintained in texts which use English language and syntax. This phenomenon concerns rhetorical pattern, argument structure etc. and is called *discoursal nativization*. The outcome of these productive processes reflects the particular sociolinguistic contexts of use.

In Great Britain and Ireland acquisition of English as a mother tongue takes place in natural circumstances. In the other EU countries English is studied both in and outside the classroom. Teaching English is present in education at all levels.

In the classroom there are artificial, formal learning settings. In Hungary between 1949 and 1990 Russian was used as the first foreign language in primary and secondary schools as well as in higher education. After the political change interest in learning a “Western” language began to grow and by the 2000s English has become the most widely studied foreign language. At some universities English is the medium of instruction in technical and economic fields. English is also frequently used to read scientific literature and to keep up with research. In these situations English means access to information and functions like a second language.

It is also possible for EU citizens to have contact with English outside the classroom. In most of the member countries learners are exposed to the English language by the media: there are films, TV programs, news broadcasts, sports and music programs, commercials and newspapers in English. Besides this there are opportunities for interaction with native as well as non-native speakers of English. And as pointed out by Berns “It happens that Europeans speak English with one another as well as with speakers of other native Englishes. And this occurs not only among high level national leaders and diplomats, such as EU officials themselves. ‘Everyday’ Germans, Italians and Dutch with varying levels of education also use English to interact with one another. This can be the German family vacationing at an Italian beach which gets acquainted - through English – with an Italian vacationing family, or the Europeans in business, trade and tourism who rely on English to get business done with one another and their clients and customers”. Without speaking English it would be impossible to trade, do business, do scientific research, go abroad etc. All these areas of life create situations where English functions as an international language. By means of English it is possible for native and non-native speakers to understand each other.

Besides the various uses and functions mentioned above it is important to pay attention to a function of English used for intra-European communication. In this situation the users of English are neither the native speakers living in Great Britain nor the English speakers of one particular EU country. In the territory of Europe there is a European-English-using speech community. “And this community represents speakers

of a non-native English, one that has been referred to as European English or Euro-English. The label European English identifies those uses of English that are not British (and not American or Canadian or Australian or any other native variety), but are distinctly European and distinguish European English speakers of other varieties. Parallel to the multiculturalism and linguistic diversity characterizing the EU countries there is a common language, a variety of English that functions as a lingua franca in the European Community.

The changing status of the English language in Europe is reflected by and can be observed both in its vocabulary and its structure. The new lexical elements demonstrate euro-mania. It means that the vocabulary contains a lot of words with the element euro. The new currency is referred to as the euro, euro notes are the valid currency used in the Euro-zone or Euro-area which consists of those Member States which have joined the EMU (Economic and Monetary Union). The euro-mania got control over the politicians, the economists and of course the media. One of the recently established words is Euroland, which refers to the area of the Member States. Since 1998, when the exchange rates of the euro and the national currencies were fixed, everyone has obtained an euro calculator. In the Member States there was a real movement to popularize the euro. The Dutch government presented a set of euro-models, called euro-kits, to its citizens. In Belgium, the government encouraged the companies to give mini-eurokits to their employees. The Spanish government sent special euromobils equipped with educational rooms to every part of the country in order to make its citizens acquainted with the euro. Austria solved it with eurotrains. France launched a campaign called 'Euros bienvenus' to stimulate the French to pay in euro from the very first day. It is not by chance the language of EU politicians, that is Euro-crats is referred to as euro-speak.

The tradesmen also had to prepare for the introduction of the euro. The large supermarkets prepared their employees to the introduction of the new currency in order to avoid the euro jams at the cash desks.

Of course it is not only the words that contain the element euro that enrich the vocabulary of the new variety of English. We find that in Euro-English, instead of the terms state, country or nation the expression Member States is used. This difference is only a subtle one, but it has important political implications. Another example illustrating this type of a subtle distinction in Euro-English is the using of the term internal market, which is slightly different from domestic market. European citizens often use the term *additionality*. It means the demand for matching funds from national or local authorities when money is provided by the European Regional Development Fund. The new vocabulary also contains the word *Berlaymont*, the name of the Commission building in Brussels. The word *Berlaymont* is used to refer to bureaucratisation and red tape.

Euro-English contains several terms which are peculiar to European experience. Users of English living in other parts of the world generally do not understand them. The process through which common expressions of European languages make their way into Euro-English is called discorsal nativization. It is

important to mention that words of European origin are first understood only by those people who know the languages from which the new words were taken. Later all users of EU-English will accept it and as a result of nativization the new forms get communicative legitimacy.

Besides the new vocabulary EU-English is characterised by a great number of abbreviations which are easy to remember, concise and convenient to use. They are often applied instead of long official names, save time in speaking and space in tables or written texts, they are used in groups of statistics, technical and scientific texts, indices, footnotes, bibliographies and by experts of similar professions. There are three types of abbreviations: clippings, acronyms and blendings. Clippings are lexical structures, in which part of a word is standing for the whole. For example EURATOM meaning European Atomic Energy Committee. Acronyms are formed from the initial letters of words that make up a name, for example EIB (European Investment Bank). Blendings are formations in which a compound is made by blending one word with another (for example eurocrat) so that the whole remains fairly analyzable .

If we want to apply the model of world Englishes to the EU countries, we have to use the inner circle as a starting point with Great Britain and Ireland occupying this circle on the grounds that in these countries English is spoken by native speakers and recognized as either the primary language or one of the two languages. The variety of English spoken here is norm-providing. But the situation in the non-norm providing countries is not as simple as that.

In the second group of countries of Kachru's model speakers used non-native varieties like Indian English or Singaporean English. But this status does not exist in the EU countries, there is no Spanish or Swedish English. But we can find some similarities between these countries of the original model and that of the EU countries: English plays an important role in the visual and sound media and in interpersonal communication.

In the expanding circle, English has the status of international language, is taught in schools as a foreign language and speakers develop performance varieties. In addition to acquiring the language, learners have to acquire the appropriate forms of behaviour accepted in these countries of the inner circle. English in Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain match such characteristics and can be identified with the expanding circle.

The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany and Sweden use English as an international language. If we contrast these countries to Japan, we find that people living in these European countries have more opportunities to use English and more contact with native speakers than do Japanese. Germans for example do not have to go abroad or work for international firms to use English, but Japanese do. After the war there was an influx of military personnel to Germany where people were exposed to American products, culture and the language. In the original model the outer circle is occupied by countries which had been colonized by users of English. In India for example English is an official language and a second (or third) language of the population and it has developed an institutionalized variety. But although in Germany



English is a first foreign language taught at schools, it is not declared as an official or state language. Nor has it developed an institutionalized variety. To this, M. Berns adds that while proficiency of English among users is not as widespread as in Singapore, it is greater than in Japan. In addition, it is hard to dismiss English in Germany from the outer circle given the functions it serves there (that English in Japan does not) in various social, cultural, commercial, and educational settings. The situation of shared characteristics holds for the Netherlands and Luxembourg, too.

In conclusion, the linguistic situation concerning the function of English in the European Community is rather complex and due to its multiple function English is likely to become the primary language of the citizens of the EU. In the future it will be even more widely used as a vehicle for intra-European communication. English will be used more and more as a convenient strategy to cope with an ever increasing amount of information, in business life, in the academic areas. The English language no longer belongs to its native speakers but to the world, dominating it and bringing efficiency gains in a world of rapid change and unprecedented technological progress.

**References:**

- ❖ Berns, M.1995. *English in the European Union*. In: English Today, 43,Vol.11.No.3. pp.3
- ❖ Edwards, J. 2001. *No Good Past Dover*. In: English Today 68, Vol.17, No.4. Cambridge: University Press. pp. 3-13.
- ❖ Modiano M. 2001. *A new variety of English*. In: English Today 68. Vol. 17, No.4. pp. 13-14.
- ❖ Kachru, B.B. 1985. „Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: the English language in the outer circle.” In Quirk R. and Widdowson, H.G., eds. *English in the World: Teaching and learning the language and literatures*. pp. 11-30.- Cambridge: University Press.
- ❖ Kachru, Braj B.1992. *The Other Tongue: English Across Cultures*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- ❖ McArthur, T. 2001. *Euro-evolution?* In: English Today 68. Vol. 17, No.4. p. 2.
- ❖ Sarolta, S. *European Integration Studies*, Miskolc, vol.2, nr.2, 2003,pp53-64
- ❖ Quirk, R. 1991. *The Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London-New York: Longman